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Lenin Year

Will the Soviet Union Survive Until 1984?
by Andrei Amalrik.
Harper & Row, 93 pp., $4.95

The New Russian Tragedy
by Anatole Shub.
Norton, 128 pp., $4.50

The Demonstration in Pushkin Square
by Pavel Litvinov.
Gambit, 128 pp., $4.95

Message From Moscow
by An Observer.
Knopf, 288 pp., $5.95

My Testimony
by Anatoly Marchenko.
Dutton, 415 pp., $8.95

Russia: Hopes And Fears
by Alexander Werth.
Simon & Schuster, 352 pp., $6.95

War Between Russia and China
by Harrison E. Salisbury.
Norton, 224 pp., $5.95

The Masaryk Case
by Claire Sterling.
Harper & Row, 366 pp., $7.95

Report On My Husband
by Josefa Slánská.
Atheneum, 208 pp., $5.95

Neal Ascherson

It is Lenin year. This month, it is one hundred years since there was born in Simbirsk on the Volga that impatient, redheaded person who changed the world more fundamentally than any other man since Mohammed. In Moscow, the Caliphate has already stupefied its subjects with Leninolatry: thousands of little dead-white busts, a billion chocolate cakes and puff pastries bearing in relief the face of the man from Simbirsk, countless speeches and articles maintaining that the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as presented by Messrs. Brezhnev and Kosygin is precisely that socialist fatherland which Vladimir Ilyich would have wanted to see. In China, the Moslem Brotherhood of Peking dismisses the Moscow celebrations as an obscene smear and claims Lenin for its own. In the pagan West, the game of quotations is played to suggest that Lenin were he to awaken in his mausoleum would repudiate everything he found about him.

That is unbalanced. Lenin would likely be satisfied enough to find the state he founded militarily secure, technically advanced, and adequately fed. His criticisms would be secondary but acid nonetheless: the tendency toward chauvinism and bureaucracy against which he fought so desperately in the last months of his life has not been overcome, but instead has produced both the absurd quarrel with China and the internal reluctance to undertake economic experiment and change.

Above all, the "cultural revolution" which he considered so necessary has not been carried through beyond limited social groups. This, from a very different standpoint, is the theme of Andrei Amalrik's *Will the Soviet Union Survive Until 1984?*, an essay unusual among Russian dissident writings in that it is aimed primarily at Western public opinion.

To call Amalrik's book pessimistic would be a pale reflection of this prophecy of doom. Amalrik, a young historian, suggests that there is little chance of fundamental reform from any foreseeable Russian leadership. The division between the "middle class" of specialists and functionaries, weakly agitating for a more genuine rule of law, and the "uncultured" masses below will widen. War will break out with China between 1975 and 1980, a prolonged wasting war which will drain the Soviet Union of its strength. Eastern Europe and a reunited Germany will press greedily upon a weakened Russia from the other flank. Eventually the system will collapse. The middle-class "democratic" reformers will be swamped, however, by the masses' terrible frenzy for destruction.

"I have no doubt," Amalrik pronounces, "that this great Eastern Slav empire created by Germans, Byzantines and Mongols has entered the last decades of its existence." This sort of invaluable and brilliant. He divides what he calls the "Democratic Movement" into "genuine Marxist-Leninists" (what the Caliphate would call revisionists), liberals, Christians, and, not really within the movement, "neo-Slavophiles." The first three categories seek the return of the rule of law based on respect for the rights of man. They are a "middle-class" group, requiring intellectual freedom for their work and law to protect their property. But Amalrik, in his usual detached way, considers this group too effectively policed, too defensive, and too much involved with the state as its employer to succeed or to spread its protest to the masses.

Amalrik was a friend of Anatole Shub, the Washington *Post* correspondent in Moscow until his expulsion last year, and there are traces of Amalrikism in Shub's own *The New Russian Tragedy*. As the title suggests, he also suspects that the present regime is virtually incapable of "reappraising

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